

State Approving Agency Veterans Education

Tennessee Higher Education
Commission



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Veterans Education

The Tennessee State Approving Agency (SAA) is a division of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and is responsible for approving and monitoring programs of education and training offered within the state to those who are eligible for GI Bill benefits. The SAA works closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and follows federal and state guidelines in administering the approval program.

Mission of the State Approving Agency

The Tennessee SAA is responsible for approving programs in Tennessee educational and training institutions for GI Bill benefits; promoting and safeguarding quality education and training programs for veterans and other eligible persons; ensuring greater educational and training opportunities to meet the changing needs of veterans; and assisting VA in preventing fraud, waste and abuse in the administration of the GI Bill. Education and training programs must have SAA approval before veterans and other eligible persons may receive GI Bill benefits for those programs.

- [Information on what the State Approving Agency approves and Types of training establishments that may be approved](#)
- [The approval process](#)
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Veterans Benefits Information

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>

Contains specific information regarding GI Bill programs

<http://www.tn.gov/veteran>

Contains information regarding VA benefits in Tennessee



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Approval Information

What the SAA Approves

The SAA approves institutional or facility:

- Publications such as catalogs, student handbooks, and class schedules;
- Programs which lead to an educational or immediate vocational goal such as a degree, certificate, postgraduate residency, or non-collegiate technical or trade programs;
- Policies on attendance, academic progress, evaluation of credit for prior education and training, student conduct and specific types of instruction which include television courses, practicums or internships or other developmental programs.

Types of Training Establishments that may be Approved

In order for veterans or other eligible persons to receive GI bill benefits in postsecondary programs, the educational institution must be approved by the Tennessee State Approving Agency. Examples of types of institutions are:

- Colleges and Universities
- Private Occupational Schools
- Cosmetology/Barber Schools
- Hospital Training and Residency Programs
- High School Diploma, GED, or Post-Diploma Certificate Programs
- Business and Organizations that Sponsor Formal Apprenticeship and on-the-job Training Programs
- Part 141 Flight Schools



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Tennessee Schools Approved for Veterans Training (GI Bill)

- [Approved Schools](#), Updated September 29, 2014



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TN Veterans Education Transition Support (VETS) Program

Passed into law in 2014, the *Tennessee Veterans Education Transition Support (VETS) Act* establishes a program of recognition for higher education institutions which allocate resources for veterans' successful transition from military service to college enrollment.

An institution receiving *VETS Campus* certification not only prioritizes outreach to veterans, but successfully delivers the services necessary to create a supportive environment where student veterans can prosper while pursuing their education.

To qualify for the *VETS Campus* designation, institutions must:

1. Conduct an annual campus survey of students who are veterans to identify the views, needs, issues and suggestions of veterans;
2. Provide information to faculty and staff about military and veterans' culture, including combat-related mental or physical disabilities or other challenges;
3. Administer orientation programs for students who are veterans;
4. Facilitate mentoring and support programs for students who are veterans;
5. Develop outreach and communication strategies for military bases located near the campus, for the purpose of assessing veterans' educational goals and meeting their identified needs;
6. Create and maintain a process for the assessment of prior learning that grants academic credit to veterans for transferable training and experience attaining through military service; and
7. Provide, on the campus website, information on the availability of prior learning assessments and potential program credit for skills, training or education obtained during military service.

Eligible institutions may apply for designation as a *VETS Campus* by submitting a written request to THEC, attention Veterans Education/VETS, outlining all outreach services offered to veterans.

For additional information on the Tennessee VETS Program, contact Tom Morrison at 615-741-7569 or tom.morrison@tn.gov.

If you are interested in having your institution approved for veterans training please follow the guidelines below:

Initially, two main criteria must be met:

1. Your institution must be licensed/authorized by the appropriate state, regional, or federal agency; and
2. If your institution is private profit or non-profit, and the training does not lead to a standard college degree, Public Law 104-275 requires that the institution and program for which approval is requested must have operated continuously for a period of two years before approval may be granted

If your institution meets the above criteria, simply send us a letter requesting approval for veterans training. If the type of training offered is not obvious from the school or business title, please provide a brief description of the training. When we receive the written inquiry, we will contact you and mail/email an application packet requesting catalogs and other data on your institution. Expect to receive the application packet approximately two weeks after you send your letter.

When you receive our application packet, please provide all of the data requested. If you have questions, please contact us for clarification. Please ensure you provide us two (2) copies of your institution's catalog, brochures, student handbook, etc.

We will also call and set up a mutually agreeable time for an on-site visit. This visit serves as an inspection of the premises and a review of all application/approval procedures. We will discuss VA student record keeping requirements during the visit, and address any questions you have about the approval process.

After reviewing your application, completing the site inspection, and assuming all approval/compliance requirements are met, we will send you a letter approving your institution for veterans training and forward our approval package to the VA for their acceptance. Once accepted, you will receive notice from the VA that the school has been accepted and that you may begin certifying veteran students for GI Bill payments.

This approval process generally takes 60-90 days. If there are eligible veteran students enrolled when you apply, please make us aware of that, and of the date the veteran(s) started training. However, please remember that no veteran student may be certified for payment of GI Bill benefits until we have approved your institution, and VA has accepted the approval.

Following the initial approval, when you publish new catalogs, or significantly change an existing catalog, you must submit an update of your institutional catalogs along with a catalog approval packet. Any questions please contact us. You may download a catalog approval packet for your type of school by choosing the appropriate link at the bottom of this article. Also, once approved, if you have had veterans enrolled for the federal fiscal year (October-September), either our office or VA will make a compliance visit to your school to review selected veterans' records. If you have not had veterans enrolled that fiscal year, we will not normally conduct a compliance visit.

Any changes to institutional programs or policies must be reported to the State Approving Agency by letter. Failure to do so could result in suspension of approval and the interruption of GI Bill payments to your veterans. If you have any questions at any time please contact us at tom.morrison@tn.gov, (615) 741-7569 or deborah.gardner@tn.gov, (615) 741-3606.

Catalog Approval Packets

- IHL Catalog Approval

Contact Information

- Deborah Gardner, deborah.gardner@tn.gov
(615) 741-3606
- Tom Morrison, tom.morrison@tn.gov
(615) 741-7569